

PEARL RIVER SCHOOL DISTRICT

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

NEWSLETTER

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Anxiety in Children and Adolescents

Anxiety is one of the most common experiences of children and adults. It is our body's natural, adaptive reaction to stress. Typically anxiety presents itself as worry. Anxious children are much more likely to see minor things as potentially threatening. For example, being called on by a teacher might be slightly anxiety-producing for many students, but the anxious child is much more likely to believe that their participation will be a complete disaster.

Anxious children are likely to engage in a variety of avoidance behaviors to reduce exposure to threat. In the classroom, they may appear quiet, pick easy tasks over difficult ones, and avoid situations in which they envision failure. This may impact their interactions with friends and may cause them to avoid new social situations and group interactions. Although there may be some basis for worry, it is usually out of proportion to the situation and to an unrealistic degree.

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5, 4, 3, 2, 1 GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

HOW TO DO IT:

This is a calming technique that can help you get through tough or stressful situations. The objective of this technique is to take you through your five senses to help remind you of the present.

Take a deep belly breath to begin.

5 - LOOK: Look around for 5 things that you can see, and say them out loud. For example, you could say, "I see the book", "I see the phone", "I see the cup", etc.

4 - FEEL: Pay attention to your body and think of 4 things that you can feel, and say them out loud. For example, you could say, "I feel my feet warm in my socks", "I feel the hair on the back of my neck", "I feel the pillow I am sitting on", etc.

3 - LISTEN: Listen for 3 sounds. It could be the sound of traffic outside, the sound of typing, the sound of your tummy rumbling, etc. Say the three things out loud.

2 - SMELL: Say two things you can smell. If you're allowed to, it's okay to move to another spot and sniff something. If you can't smell anything at the moment or you can't move, then name your 2 favorite smells.

1 - TASTE: Say one thing you can taste. It may be the toothpaste from brushing your teeth, or a mint from after lunch. If you can't taste anything, then say your favorite thing to taste.

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Home Based Interventions to Address Anxiety



- Be consistent in how you handle problems and administer discipline.
- Be patient and be prepared to listen.
- Avoid being overly critical, disparaging, impatient, or cynical.
- Maintain realistic, attainable goals and expectations for your child.
- Avoid communicating that perfection is expected or desired.
- Maintain consistent but flexible routines for homework, chores, activities, etc.
- Accept that mistakes are a normal part of growing up and that no one is expected to do everything equally well.
- Praise and reinforce effort, even if success is less than expected. Practice and prepare for upcoming events, such as giving a speech or other performance, or an upcoming exam.
- Teach your child simple strategies to help reduce anxiety, such as organizing materials, managing time, developing small scripts of what to do and say to him/herself when anxiety increases, and learning how to calm down under stressful conditions.
- Avoid treating feelings, questions, and statements about feeling anxious as silly or unimportant.
- Often, reasoning is not effective in reducing anxiety. Refrain from criticizing your child for not being able to respond to rational approaches.
- Seek outside help if the problem persists and continues to interfere with daily activities